

LIBRARY BUILDING PROJECTS

GUIDING LIBRARY BUILDING PROJECTS

**Contributed By: Martha Shinnors, Consultant
Washington State Library**

At some point during your tenure as a trustee, there is a good possibility that you will face the question of library expansion or remodeling. Often, an unmet need for service or space, identified as a part of long-range planning, prompts the discussion. As a trustee, your job will be to make the decision to implement a facilities project, provide support and assistance to the director, supply leadership in the campaign to inform the community, determine how the project will be funded, and represent the community needs and interests.

Needs Analysis

A picture of what you want your library to accomplish, identified as a building program, is developed after conducting a thorough needs analysis. Although the board will depend on the library director to carry out the analysis activity, these are the factors that the board will need to consider when deciding whether to initiate a building project:

- **Population:** Increases or decreases in population size, changing demographic mixes, new programs or activities anticipated, as well as services to be eliminated or curtailed.
- **Collection:** Evaluations of stack capacity, projection of growth, stacks open, closed or a combination, yearly volumes acquisition, need for auxiliary storage, and impact of electronic resources.
- **Seating Capacity:** Increase or decrease need for seats, and an increase or decrease in patron time spent in the library.
- **Library as a Place:** The library as an image and/or symbol for the community and library space as a community center.
- **Physical Problems of the Building:** Dangers for users and/or staff, building systems that are outmoded and/or expensive, a floor plan that meets changing service needs, and existing space for technology access.
- **ADA compliance:** Does the library meet the ADA standards for access to the library facility and for access to resources and services offered within the building.
- **Site:** Desirable location for the population served that is both visible and accessible, environmental problems, expansion limitations on the site, adequate access through parking, public transportation, or other means of access.
- **Standards or Guidelines:** Although some states have adopted standards for physical facilities, Washington State has not. Reviewing standards from other states may result in some useful comparisons. For example, the Kentucky Facility Standards (<http://www.kdla.net/libserv/newlibs/standards.pdf>) includes book collection size, square footage for staff work space, parking spaces, total square footage floor space, public Internet access/general workstations, computers for administrative/reference use, and automation systems by population service size.

Decisions Concerning a Potential Building Program

The board will have the following options to consider after the needs analysis is done and a potential building program identified:

- **New construction** – which will include decisions on site selection, building team, building program, design phases, bidding and construction, and plans for further expansion.
- **Remodeling** – which will involve building code changes, improvements in building systems, technology upgrades, and possible relocation of areas within the existing library.
- **Expansion** – which will involve items listed under remodeling with the inclusion of new space that can be added up, down, or out, and plans for future space.
- **Do nothing at this time** – there are no funds available or no political will to move ahead.

Human Elements to Consider in a Building Project

The human element must always be addressed in major building projects. The key to success is to consider ahead of time how the board and library director intends to meet some of the following responsibilities and potential hazards.

- **Communication**

In the initial planning stages it is important for the board and staff to regularly review the developing plans. Decisions are made on the level of information shared and the frequency of reporting. Roles and responsibilities between board, director, trustees and others must be clear. It often takes awhile to sort out roles and relationships within the community and board, the building committee and who reports to whom. Much time and involvement will be necessary on the part of trustees to build and maintain successful communications.

Plans should be reviewed to see if the stated requirements of the building plan are met. During construction, the library director or coordinator should make regular progress reports to the board. It is important to delegate one board spokesperson and or contact responsible for sharing information with other board members.

- **Conflict**

Conflict is inevitable and can best be handled by open and frequent communication. Participants must all understand why a new building is needed. The board needs to recognize that people will always have a personal inclination for certain architectural styles. The ideal architect is one who listens carefully to the board members as well as having the skills to translate the library requirements into an effective design.

Establish a Governing Authority and Involve Staff and Community

Creating an advisory board, holding public meetings and focus groups, and having open staff discussion will encourage buy-in for the project.

A list of those who should be involved include:

- Library – input from staff members regarding effects on their service area.
- Users – keep informed.
- Other governing departments with technical or special expertise.

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- Friends of the Library and the Library Foundation.
 - Community planning groups and associated organizations.
 - Others.

Helpful Resources

To help in the planning stages make use of the following:

- Annual building issues of *Library Journal* and *American Libraries*
- LAMA resources (Library Administration and Management Association of ALA) that include workshops and a list of library building consultants. See <http://www.ala.org/lama/index.html>.
- Library visits to analyze what works in other communities. Try to visit both new buildings and recently remodeled or expanded ones. Virtual tours can also be taken via the Internet at <http://www.slais.ubc.ca/resources/architecture/index3.html>.

Finding an Architect

The ability of an architect to really listen and to respond to your library's building program is critical to the success of the project. Ask references for the architect's strengths and weaknesses and his/her ability to work well with people.

Often a building consultant, hired at the onset of the project, can facilitate the building experience by bringing the perspective of a third party. Savings will usually offset the cost of a consultant in time and expense.

Funding Sources

Options for funding can be one or a combination of the following:

- Local funds – municipal appropriation or borrowing.
- Private fund raising.
- Public subscriptions – taxing and bonds.
- Federal and/or state – often matching.
- Special reserve funds.
- Grants by private corporations.
- Gifts from individual donors.

One excellent source for funding information is:

<http://www.fdncenter.org> This site allows searching a database that includes private foundation, corporate grantmakers, grantmaking public charities, community foundations, non-profit organizations, and government resources.

Other sites for information include:

Assistance Coordinating Council (IACC): <http://infrafundng.wa.gov/default.htm>

U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Housing Service Community Facilities Program – mainly loans: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/cf/cp.htm>

Philanthropy Northwest, of special interest is the member directory:
<http://www.philanthropynew.org/index.htm>

RESOURCES

With special credit to William Sannwald, Library Consultant and presenter of the LAMA Preconference to the ALA Annual Conference, San Francisco, June 2001, “*Managing Library Building Projects: From Identifying the Need to Post-Occupancy Evaluation*”. Mr. Sannwald has been involved in the construction of over 40 library buildings.

Books

Brawner, Lee B. and Donald K. Beck. *Determining Your Public Library’s Future Size: A Needs Assessment Planning Model*. American Library Association, 1996.

Cirillo, Susan E. and Robert E. Danford. *Library Buildings, Equipment, and the ADA: Compliance Issues and Solutions*. American Library Association, 1996.

Dahlgre, Anders C. *Planning the Small Library Facility*, 2nd ed. American Library Association, 1996.

Sannwald, William W. *Checklist of Library Building Design Considerations*, 4th ed. American Library Association, 2001.

Woodward, Jeannette. *Countdown to a New Library: Managing the Building Project*. American Library Association, 2000.

Magazines

American Libraries. The annual April issue focuses on library facilities.

Library Journal. The annual December issue focuses on library building and buildings.

Internet Websites

U.S. Department of Justice.

ADA Homepage. <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/acla/adajom1.htm>

ADA Infoline: 1-800-574-0301

ONE LIBRARY'S EXPERIENCE: THE SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOND ISSUE

**Contributed by: Gordon McHenry Jr., President
Seattle Public Library Board of Trustees**

In 1998, following the election of a new mayor, council and the appointment of a new city librarian, Seattle Public Library launched a new effort to gain public and political support for rebuilding the city's 107-year-old library system.

A \$156 million library bond measure had failed at the polls, along with a large capital bond for the schools and police department, in 1994. Economic times were not so good that year and the ballot-weary public were not in a mood to support property tax increases.

After the failure of the 1994 measure, focus groups with voters were conducted to gain a better understanding of why residents did not support the capital construction measure. One important piece of information received was that residents did not understand the relationship of the central library to the branches – that every day book trucks leave the central library with thousands of books to support the branches.

The library began a new outreach effort to help the public understand the necessity of the central library and its role in serving the branches. Library representatives scheduled meetings with community councils and clubs to talk about library services and how capital improvements would benefit their communities.

At the same time, the library kept the city council informed of library needs and in 1997, the council supported a resolution agreeing to make a library bond measure a priority in 1998.

In 1997, the Library Board named a new head librarian, Deborah L. Jacobs. Jacobs knew her job was to help refine the capital plan - ensuring it met expectations for each neighborhood - and to gain citywide support for it.

In a three-month period, Jacobs and the board visited communities throughout the city, getting feedback on the plan and incorporating changes. It was clear more emphasis needed to be placed on the branch libraries, as well as clarity on the role of the central library as the hub of the system. Meetings were also held with staff in every branch library, as well as with community groups and neighborhood activists, neighborhood by neighborhood. When the plan was nearly final, the Seattle Public Library Foundation paid for a scientific poll of Seattle voters to gauge support for the plan. The results showed the plan was supported by more than the majority of voters asked.

On March 13, 1998, Jacobs, the board, city council and mayor, along with hundreds of library supporters and media, presented the final "Libraries for All" building program. The 63-page program (<http://www.spl.lib.wa.us/capplan/libforall/cp98prop.html>) highlighted a letter from the mayor and city librarian explaining the years of community conversations in developing the program and a page devoted to each neighborhood library improvement in the city. It was an exciting moment – and emphasized the tremendous support the plan had – from the top city leaders to the neighborhood groups. People felt their library needs were reflected in the plan. Media coverage was positive.

The actual bond issue request was drafted by library and city finance staff. An independent campaign committee called “Neighbors for Libraries,” composed of key library stakeholders, was formed shortly after. The Library Board president at the time was a member. The committee selected a campaign consultant and manager, responsible for developing and implementing a campaign strategy. The strategy included enhancing the already strong grassroots support for the plan.

Library Board members were very involved in attending community meetings to answer questions about the capital program and were involved in fund-raising as well. Library staff members also helped with the general information campaign – attending community meetings as well to answer questions.

Library staff also worked with the media to help raise awareness of the proposed capital program and received extensive coverage from print, radio and television. The library received positive endorsements from all the media that gave endorsements for bond measures.

Many of the pitfalls that worked against the library in 1994, were overcome in 1998: having a mayor and council that were favorable toward libraries, a strong economy, a staff that was supportive of the program, a city librarian that worked tirelessly to get out the message—that this was a plan that would benefit all residents.

LIBRARY CAPITAL FACILITY AREAS (LCFA)

In 1995 the Washington State Legislature passed the law providing for LCFA's in order to finance capital library facilities. (RCW 27.15.005)

Definition of a Library Capital Facility Area

LCFA's are quasi-municipal corporations and independent taxing units that exist within the boundaries of:

- Rural county library districts,
- Rural intercounty library districts,
- Rural partial-county library districts, or
- Island library districts.

A library capital facility area may include all of, or a portion of, a city or town. The library district usually requires that the city or town must be annexed to the library district before an LCFA is established to ensure long term funding of library services.

Establishing an LCFA

There are two major activities required by law to establish an LCFA. They are:

- **Written Request and Resolution**

A majority of the members of the board(s) of trustees of a library district or a city or town library sign and submit a written request to the legislative authority(ies). The request shall include:

1. A description of the boundaries of the library capital facility area; and
2. A resolution of the legislative authority of each city or town, and board of trustees of each library district, with territory included within the proposed library capital facility area indicating both:
 - a. Its approval of the creation of the proposed library capital facility area; and
 - b. Agreement on how election costs will be paid for submitting ballot propositions to voters.

- **Proposition Submitted to Ballot**

The county authority then submits two separate propositions in a general or special election:

1. Authorizing establishment of the proposed LCFA. (Requires simple majority vote to approve).
2. Authorizing the LCFA, if it is approved by a simple majority, to finance general indebtedness and to impose excess levies to retire the indebtedness.

(Requires voter approval by 3/5th or 60% of those voting on the proposition. In addition the total number of persons voting must be not less than 40% of the voters residing in the LCFA who voted at the last preceding general election).

Governance of an LCFA

Each county legislative authority appoints three of its members. A county may choose to be represented by less than three members by mutual agreement of the legislative authorities of the participating counties.

Authority of an LCFA

An LCFA may construct, acquire, maintain, and remodel library capital facilities. "Library capital facilities" includes both real and personal property including, but not limited to, land, buildings, site improvements, equipment, furnishings, collections, and all necessary costs related to acquisition, financing, design, construction, equipping, and remodeling.

They may, by interlocal agreement, contract with a county, city, or library district to design, administer construction or operate, or maintain a LCFA.

Legal title to capital facilities acquired or constructed may be transferred, acquired, or held by the LCFA or by a county, city, town or library district in which the facility is located.

An LCFA may accept gifts or grants of money or property of any kind for the same purposes for which it is authorized to borrow money.

Maximum Levy Allowed by Law

A LCFA may contract indebtedness or borrow money to finance library capital facilities and may issue general obligation bonds. General obligation bonds can be issued in a total amount no more than one and one quarter percent of the value of taxable property within the LCFA.

Dissolution of a Library Capital Facility Area.

A LCFA may be dissolved by a majority vote of the governing body when all obligations under any general obligation bonds issued by the library capital facility area have been discharged and any other contractual obligations have either been discharged or assumed by another governmental entity.

Potential Issues to be Considered Before a LCFA is Formally Proposed

(The following Information is quoted with permission from an informational memo prepared by the Sno-Isle Regional Library)

Before a library capital facility area is formed, Sno-Isle Regional Library and the city within the new area will work together to resolve issues including the following:

- Site selection.
- Acquisition of property.
- Selection and oversight of architects and consultants.
- Design team participation and authority.
- Boundaries of the Library Capital Facility Area.
- Amount of the general obligation bonds.
- Financial and construction administration.

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- Ownership of the building, equipment, furnishings and library collection.
 - Maintenance, repairs and utilities.
 - Election costs.
 - Handling of gifts and grants.
 - Resolution of other issues that may come up during formation of the capital facility area.

RESOURCES

Revised Code of Washington 27.15.005